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QUASAR™

SKELETRAUMA FOR QUASAR™!

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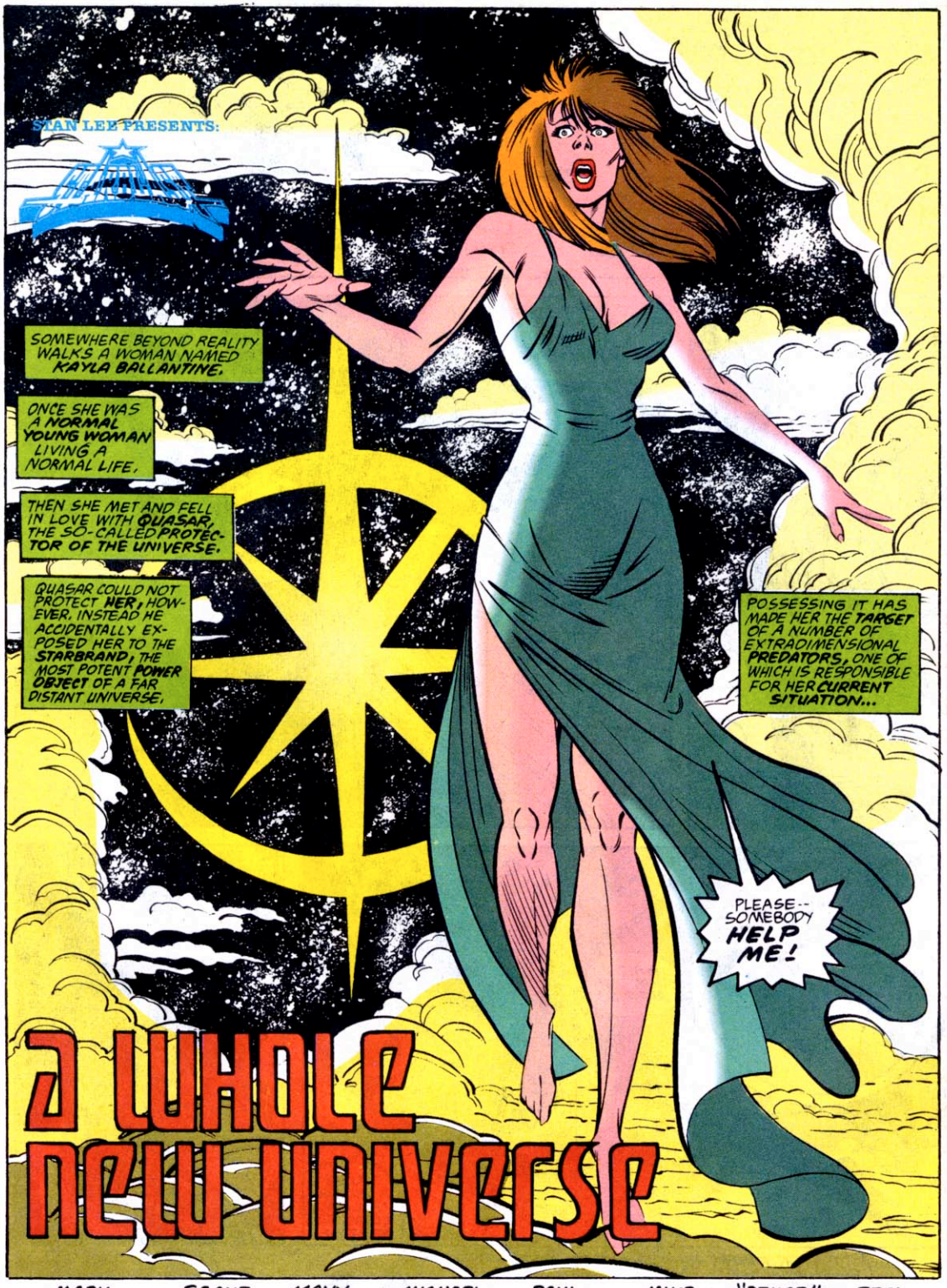
STAN LEE PRESENTS:
STARBLAST
SOMEWHERE BEYOND REALITY WALKS A WOMAN NAMED KAYLA BALLANTINE.
ONCE SHE WAS A NORMAL YOUNG WOMAN LIVING A NORMAL LIFE,
THEN SHE MET AND FELL IN LOVE WITH QUASAR, THE SO-CALLED PROTECTOR OF THE UNIVERSE.
QUASAR COULD NOT PROTECT HER, HOWEVER. INSTEAD HE ACCIDENTALLY EXPOSED HER TO THE STARBRAND, THE MOST POTENT POWER OBJECT OF A FAR DISTANT UNIVERSE,
POSSESSING IT HAS MADE HER THE TARGET OF A NUMBER OF EXTRADIMENSIONAL PREDATORS, ONE OF WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HER CURRENT SITUATION...
PLEASE-- SOMEBODY HELP ME!
A WHOLE NEW UNIVERSE

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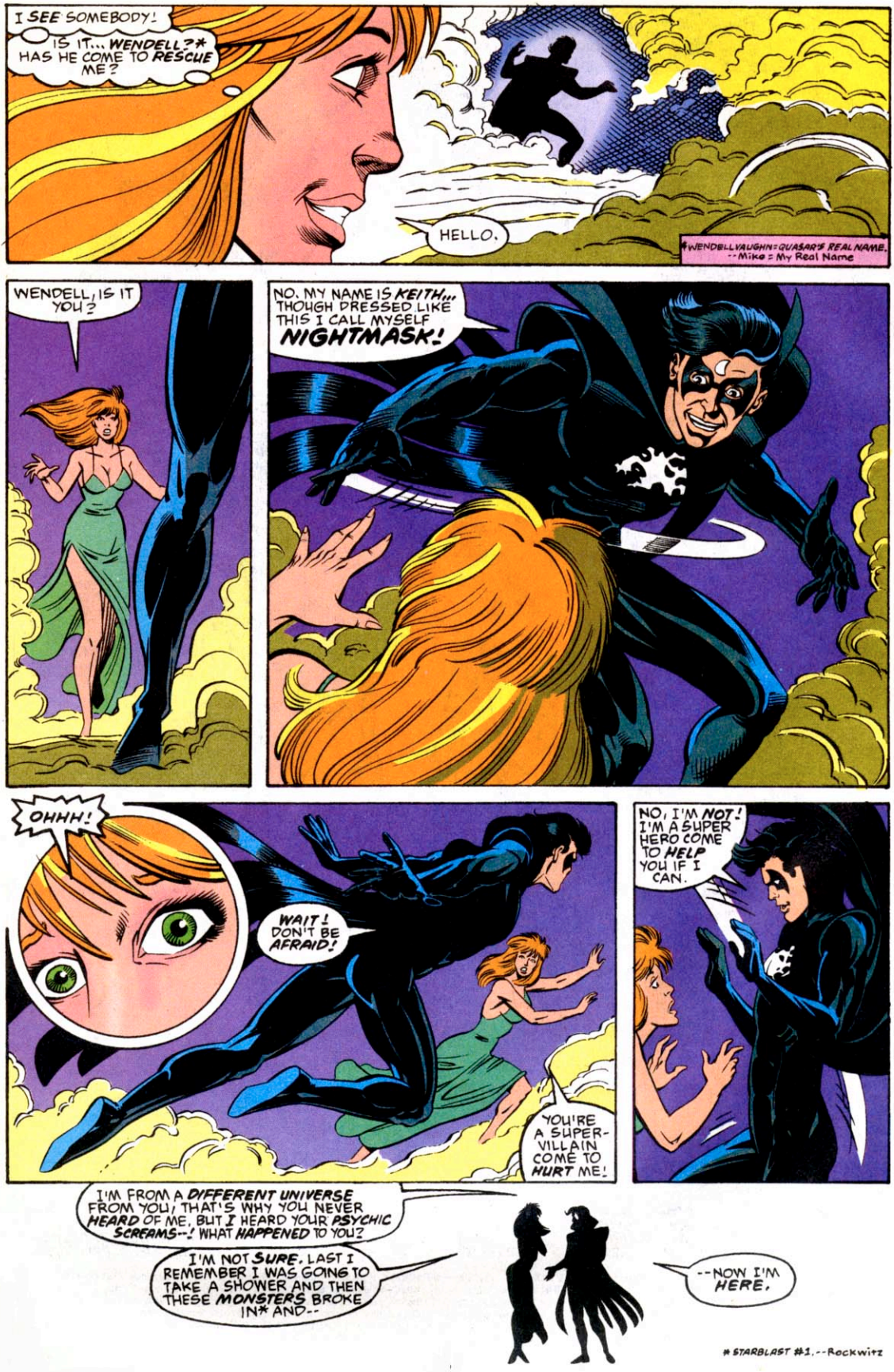
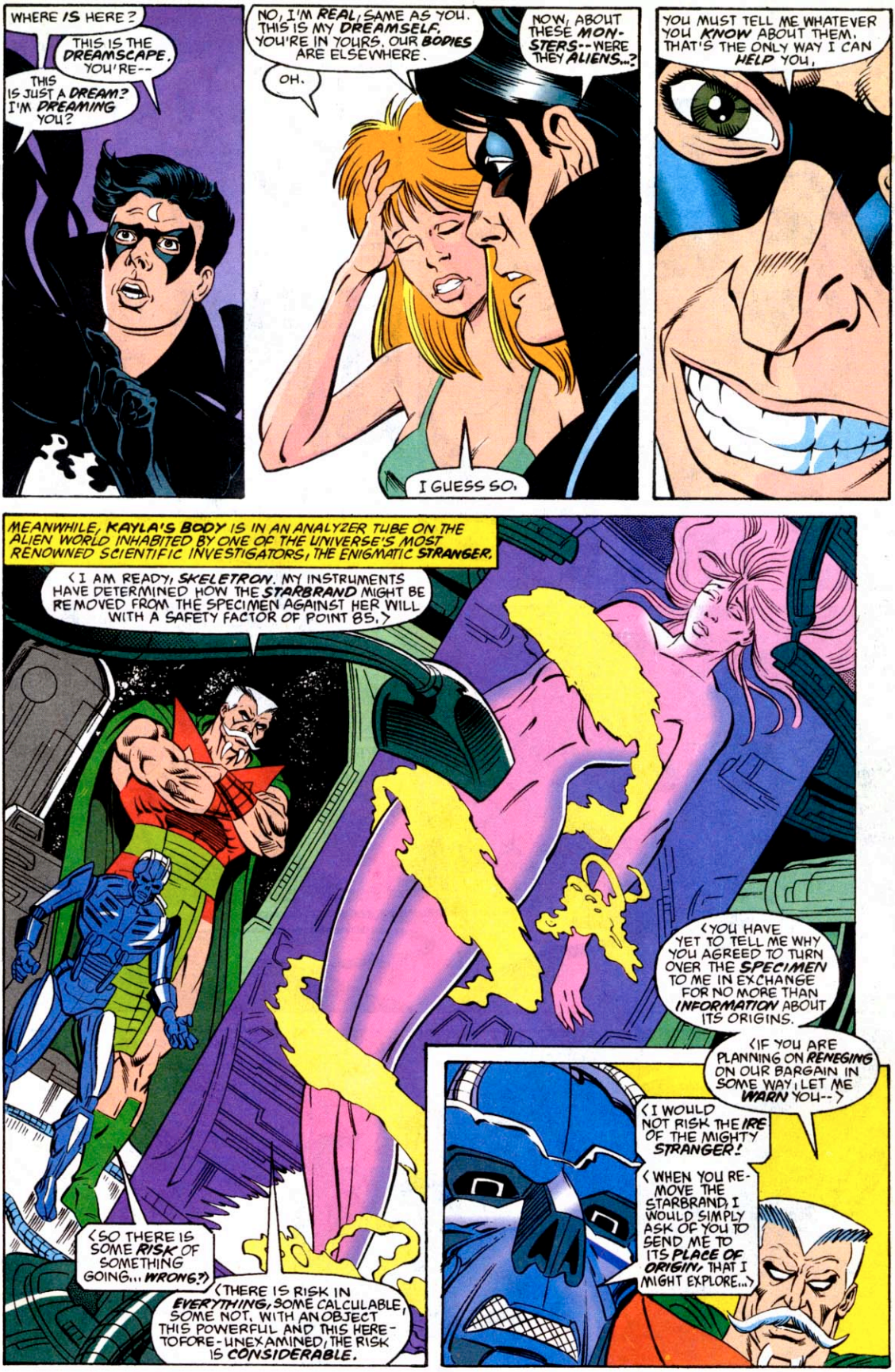

I SEE SOMEBODY!
IS IT... WENDELL?* HAS HE COME TO RESCUE ME?
HELLO.
*WENDELL VAUGHN=QUASAR'S REAL NAME, --Mike = My Real Name
WENDELL, IS IT YOU?
NO. MY NAME IS KEITH... THOUGH DRESSED LIKE THIS I CALL MYSELF NIGHTMASK!
OHHH!
WAIT! DON'T BE AFRAID!
YOU'RE A SUPER-VILLAIN COME TO HURT ME!
NO, I'M NOT! I'M A SUPER HERO COME TO HELP YOU IF I CAN.
I'M FROM A DIFFERENT UNIVERSE FROM YOU, THAT'S WHY YOU NEVER HEARD OF ME. BUT I HEARD YOUR PSYCHIC SCREAMS--! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
I'M NOT SURE. LAST I REMEMBER I WAS GOING TO TAKE A SHOWER AND THEN THESE MONSTERS BROKE IN* AND--
--NOW I'M HERE.
* STARBLAST #1, --Rockwitz


WHERE IS HERE?
THIS IS THE DREAMSCAPE. YOU'RE--
THIS IS JUST A DREAM? I'M DREAMING YOU?
NO, I'M REAL, SAME AS YOU. THIS IS MY DREAMSELF. YOU'RE IN YOURS. OUR BODIES ARE ELSEWHERE.
NOW, ABOUT THESE MONSTERS--WERE THEY ALIENS...?
OH.
I GUESS SO.
YOU MUST TELL ME WHATEVER YOU KNOW ABOUT THEM. THAT'S THE ONLY WAY I CAN HELP YOU.
MEANWHILE, KAYLA'S BODY IS IN AN ANALYZER TUBE ON THE ALIEN WORLD INHABITED BY ONE OF THE UNIVERSE'S MOST RENOWNED SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATORS, THE ENIGMATIC STRANGER.
〈I AM READY, SKELETRON. MY INSTRUMENTS HAVE DETERMINED HOW THE STARBRAND MIGHT BE REMOVED FROM THE SPECIMEN AGAINST HER WILL WITH A SAFETY FACTOR OF POINT 85.〉
〈YOU HAVE YET TO TELL ME WHY YOU AGREED TO TURN OVER THE SPECIMEN TO ME IN EXCHANGE FOR NO MORE THAN INFORMATION ABOUT ITS ORIGINS.
〈IF YOU ARE PLANNING ON RENEGING ON OUR BARGAIN IN SOME WAY, LET ME WARN YOU--〉
〈I WOULD NOT RISK THE IRE OF THE MIGHTY STRANGER!
〈WHEN YOU REMOVE THE STARBRAND, I WOULD SIMPLY ASK OF YOU TO SEND ME TO ITS PLACE OF ORIGIN, THAT I MIGHT EXPLORE...〉
〈SO THERE IS SOME RISK OF SOMETHING GOING... WRONG?〉
〈THERE IS RISK IN EVERYTHING, SOME CALCULABLE, SOME NOT. WITH AN OBJECT THIS POWERFUL AND THIS HERETOFORE-UNEXAMINED, THE RISK IS CONSIDERABLE.

<YOU BELIEVE THEN THAT OTHER *SIMILAR* POWER OBJECTS MIGHT BE FOUND THERE?>

PERHAPS, OR PERHAPS I WOULD *TAKE LEAVE* OF THIS UNIVERSE WHERE YOU *ORGANICS* PREDOMINATE...>

<HMM. WE ARE ABOUT TO RECEIVE AN *ENERGETIC VISITOR.*>

VROOSH

<*DEAL* WITH HIM, SKELETRON. THIS IS A *CRITICAL JUNCTURE,* AND I CAN ILL AFFORD TO BE *DISTURBED.*>

<WHO--?!>

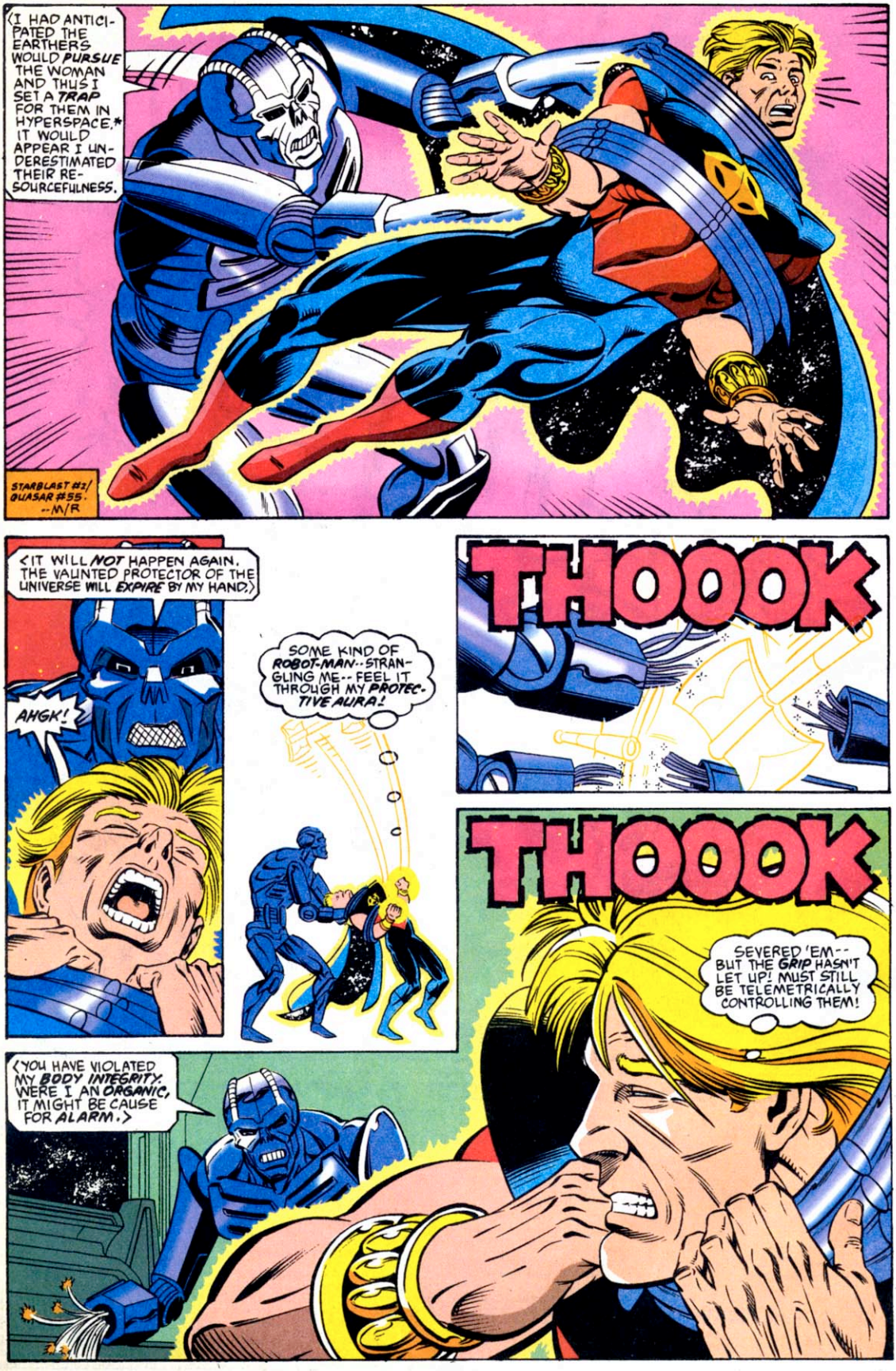
<A MEDDLESOME EARTHMAN NAMED *QUASAR.*>

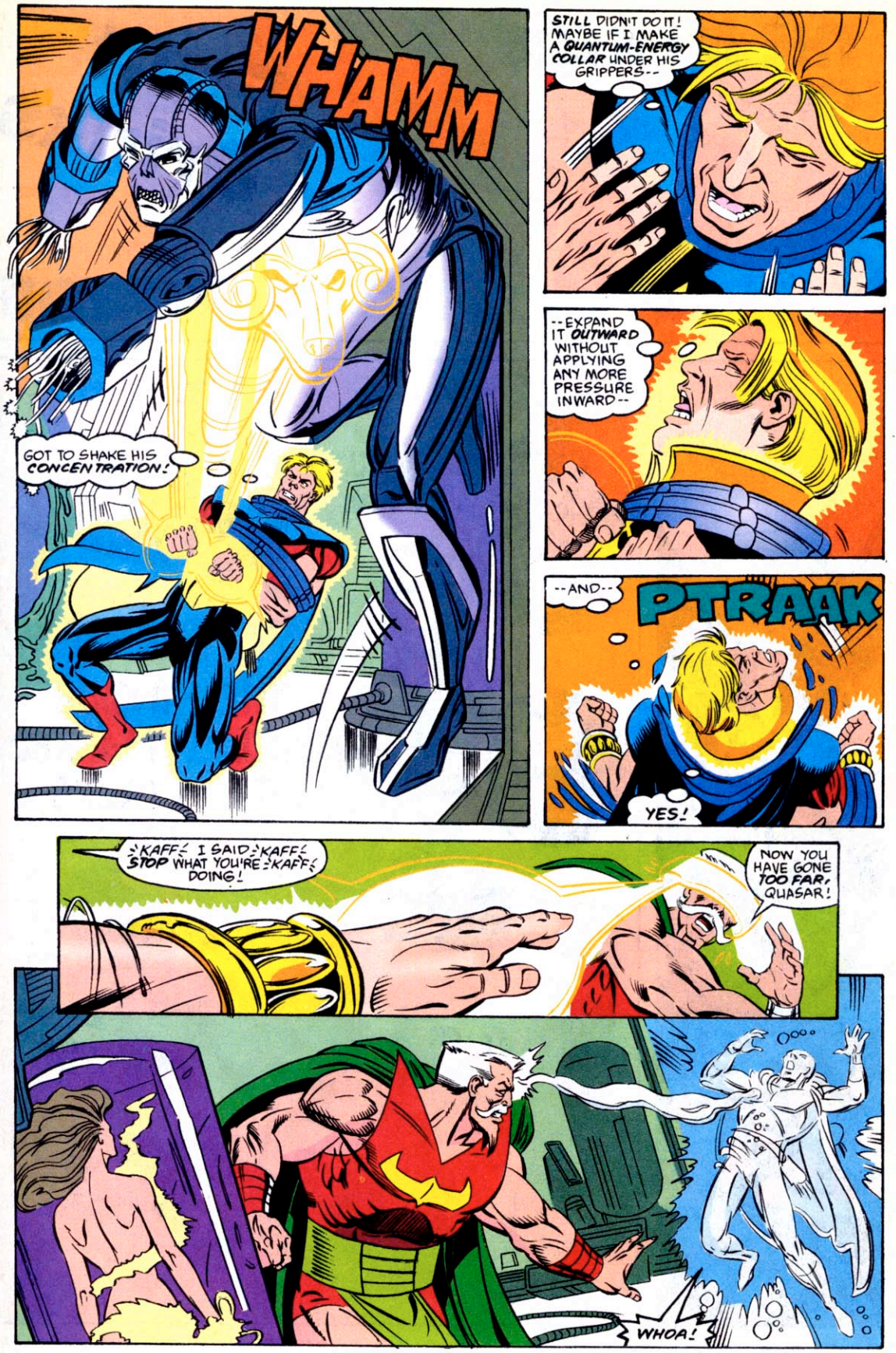
STRANGER! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO MY *GIRLFRIEND?!?*

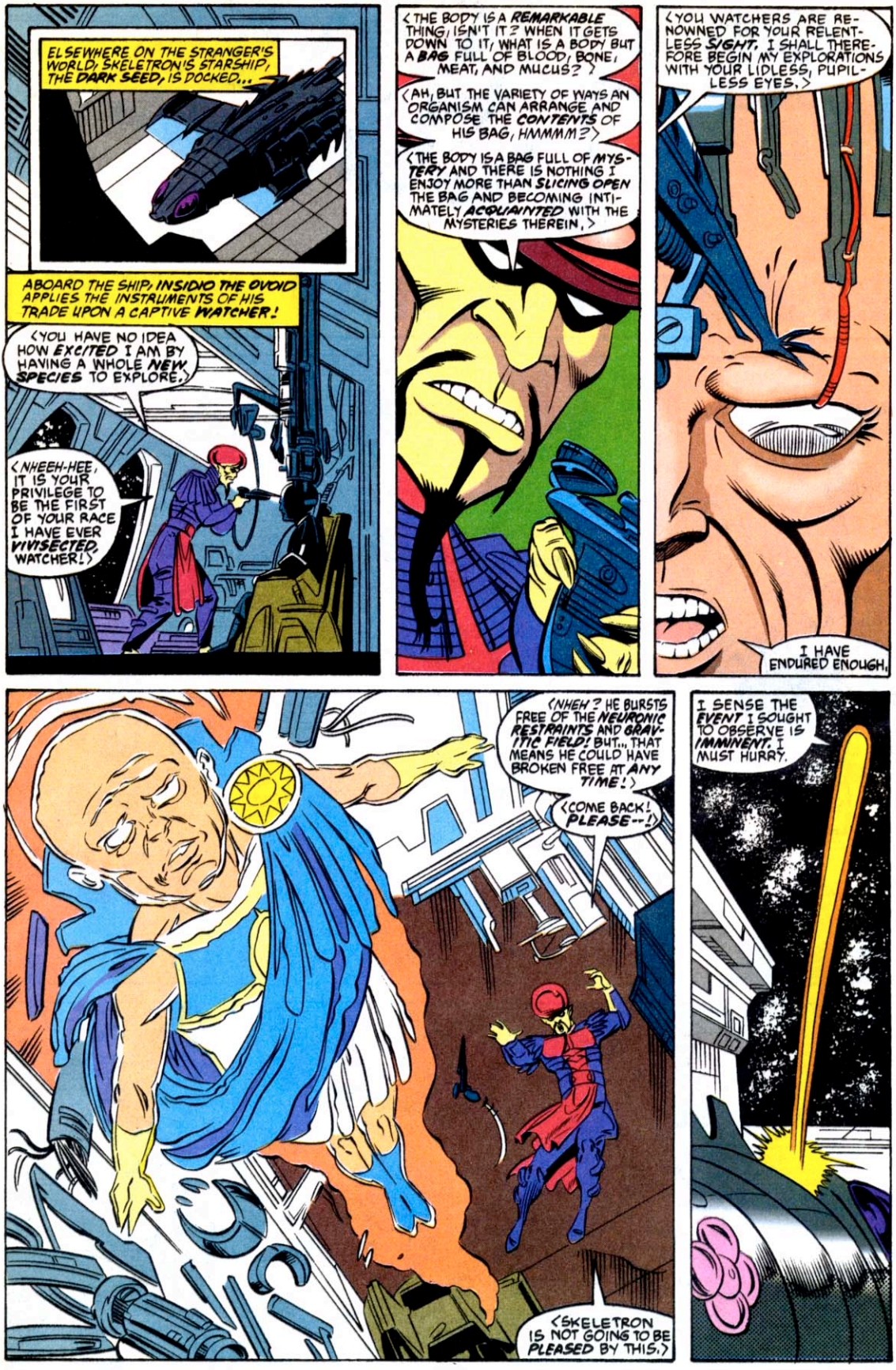
NOTHING, YET.

LET... HER... GO... AT... ONCE!

NO.


〈I HAD ANTICIPATED THE EARTHERS WOULD PURSUE THE WOMAN AND THUS I SET A TRAP FOR THEM IN HYPERSPACE,* IT WOULD APPEAR I UNDERESTIMATED THEIR RESOURCEFULNESS.
STARBLAST #2/ QUASAR #55. --M/R
〈IT WILL NOT HAPPEN AGAIN. THE VAUNTED PROTECTOR OF THE UNIVERSE WILL EXPIRE BY MY HAND.〉
AHGK!
SOME KIND OF ROBOT-MAN--STRANGLING ME--FEEL IT THROUGH MY PROTECTIVE AURA!
THOOOK
THOOOK
SEVERED 'EM--BUT THE GRIP HASN'T LET UP! MUST STILL BE TELEMETRICALLY CONTROLLING THEM!
〈YOU HAVE VIOLATED MY BODY INTEGRITY. WERE I AN ORGANIC, IT MIGHT BE CAUSE FOR ALARM.〉

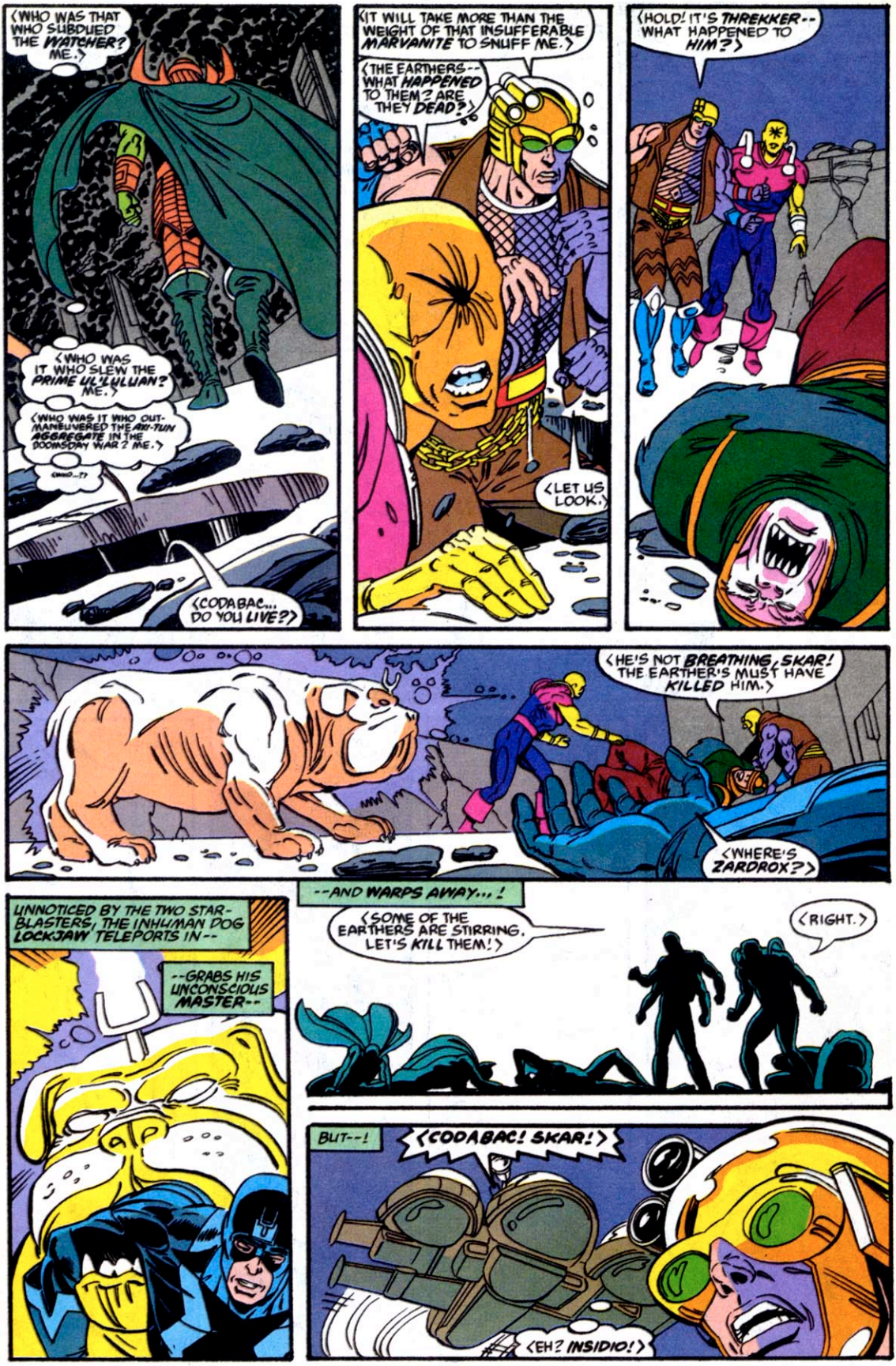

WHAMM
GOT TO SHAKE HIS CONCENTRATION!
STILL DIDN'T DO IT! MAYBE IF I MAKE A QUANTUM-ENERGY COLLAR UNDER HIS GRIPPERS--
--EXPAND IT OUTWARD WITHOUT APPLYING ANY MORE PRESSURE INWARD--
--AND--
PTRAAK
YES!
:KAFF: I SAID :KAFF: STOP WHAT YOU'RE :KAFF: DOING!
NOW YOU HAVE GONE TOO FAR, QUASAR!
WHOA!

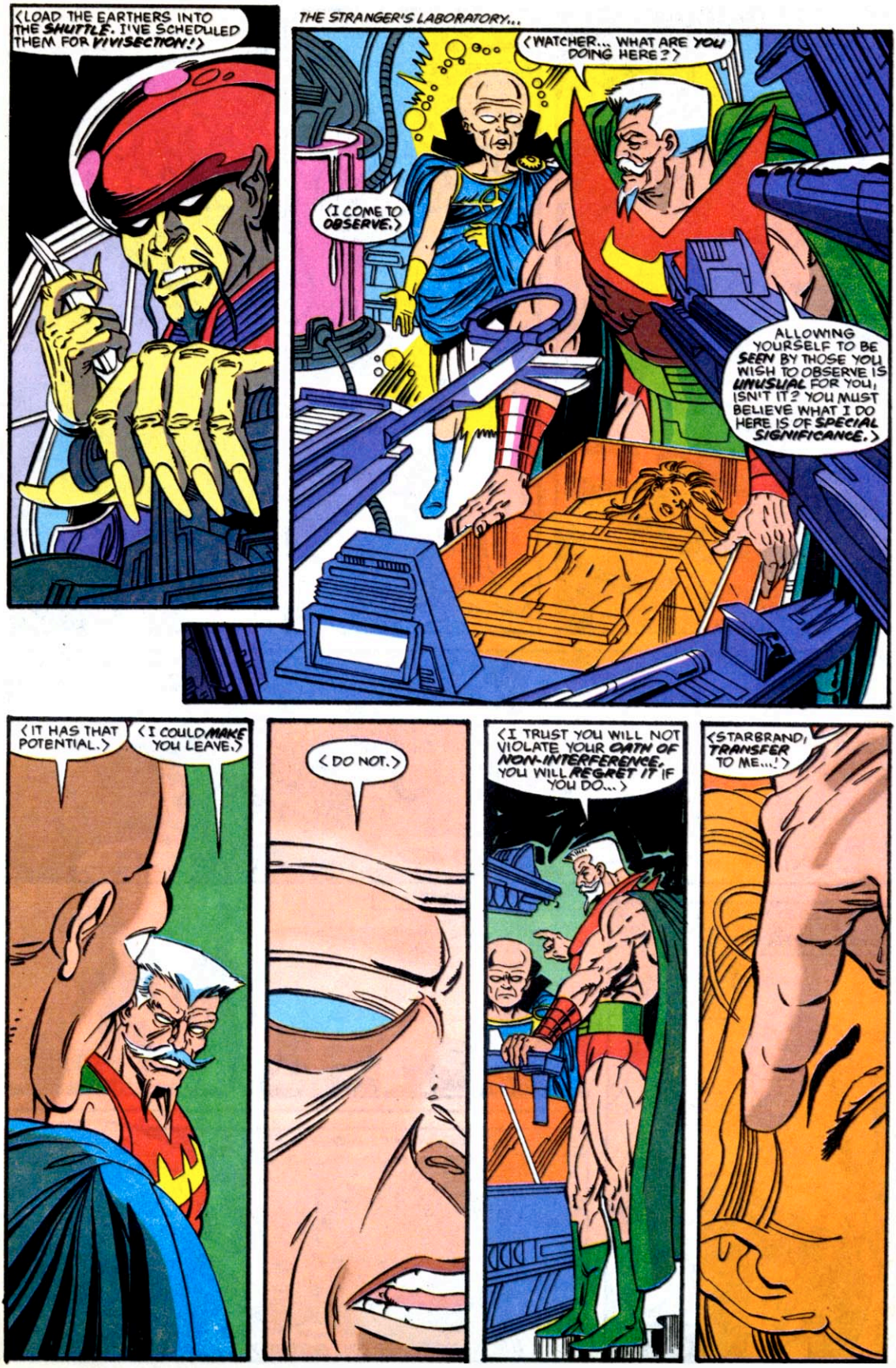

ELSEWHERE ON THE STRANGER'S WORLD, SKELETRON'S STARSHIP, THE DARK SEED, IS DOCKED...
ABOARD THE SHIP, INSIDIO THE OVOID APPLIES THE INSTRUMENTS OF HIS TRADE UPON A CAPTIVE WATCHER!
〈YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW EXCITED I AM BY HAVING A WHOLE NEW SPECIES TO EXPLORE.〉
〈NHEEH-HEE, IT IS YOUR PRIVILEGE TO BE THE FIRST OF YOUR RACE I HAVE EVER VIVISECTED, WATCHER!〉
〈THE BODY IS A REMARKABLE THING, ISN'T IT? WHEN IT GETS DOWN TO IT, WHAT IS A BODY BUT A BAG FULL OF BLOOD, BONE, MEAT, AND MUCUS?〉
〈AH, BUT THE VARIETY OF WAYS AN ORGANISM CAN ARRANGE AND COMPOSE THE CONTENTS OF HIS BAG, HMMMM?〉
〈THE BODY IS A BAG FULL OF MYSTERY AND THERE IS NOTHING I ENJOY MORE THAN SLICING OPEN THE BAG AND BECOMING INTIMATELY ACQUAINTED WITH THE MYSTERIES THEREIN.〉
〈YOU WATCHERS ARE RENOWNED FOR YOUR RELENTLESS SIGHT. I SHALL THEREFORE BEGIN MY EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR LIDLESS, PUPILLESS EYES.〉
I HAVE ENDURED ENOUGH.
〈NHEH? HE BURSTS FREE OF THE NEURONIC RESTRAINTS AND GRAVITIC FIELD! BUT... THAT MEANS HE COULD HAVE BROKEN FREE AT ANY TIME!〉
〈COME BACK! PLEASE--!〉
〈SKELETRON IS NOT GOING TO BE PLEASED BY THIS.〉
I SENSE THE EVENT I SOUGHT TO OBSERVE IS IMMINENT. I MUST HURRY.

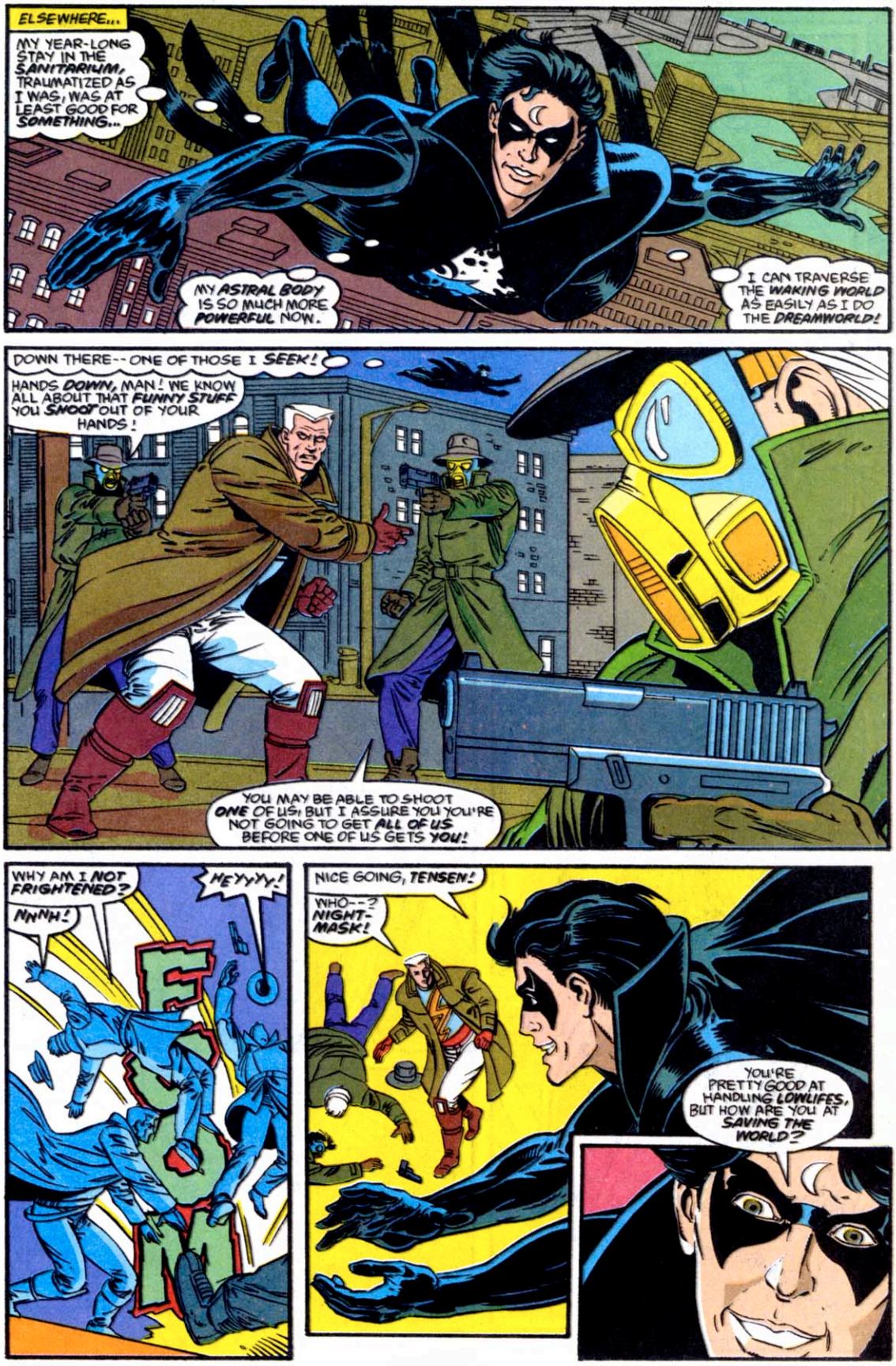
ELSEWHERE ON THE STRANGER'S WORLD, QUASAR'S COMPANION'S HAVE ENGAGED SKELETRON'S CREW IN BATTLE...
FALL BACK, EARTHERS! ONE STEP CLOSER AND I WILL SIPHON THE LAST FEW ERGS OF ENERGY FROM THIS ONE'S BODY!
MIKHAIL! HE'S GOT MIKHAIL!
DON'T HURT HIM! WE SURRENDER!
I PRAY HE DOESN'T SEE MY DARKFORCE SNEAK UP ON HIM--
--UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE!
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MY BROTHER? SPEAK TO ME!
MIKHAIL...?
HE'S SO... COLD...
CAN HE BE--?
NOOOOOOOOOOOO!

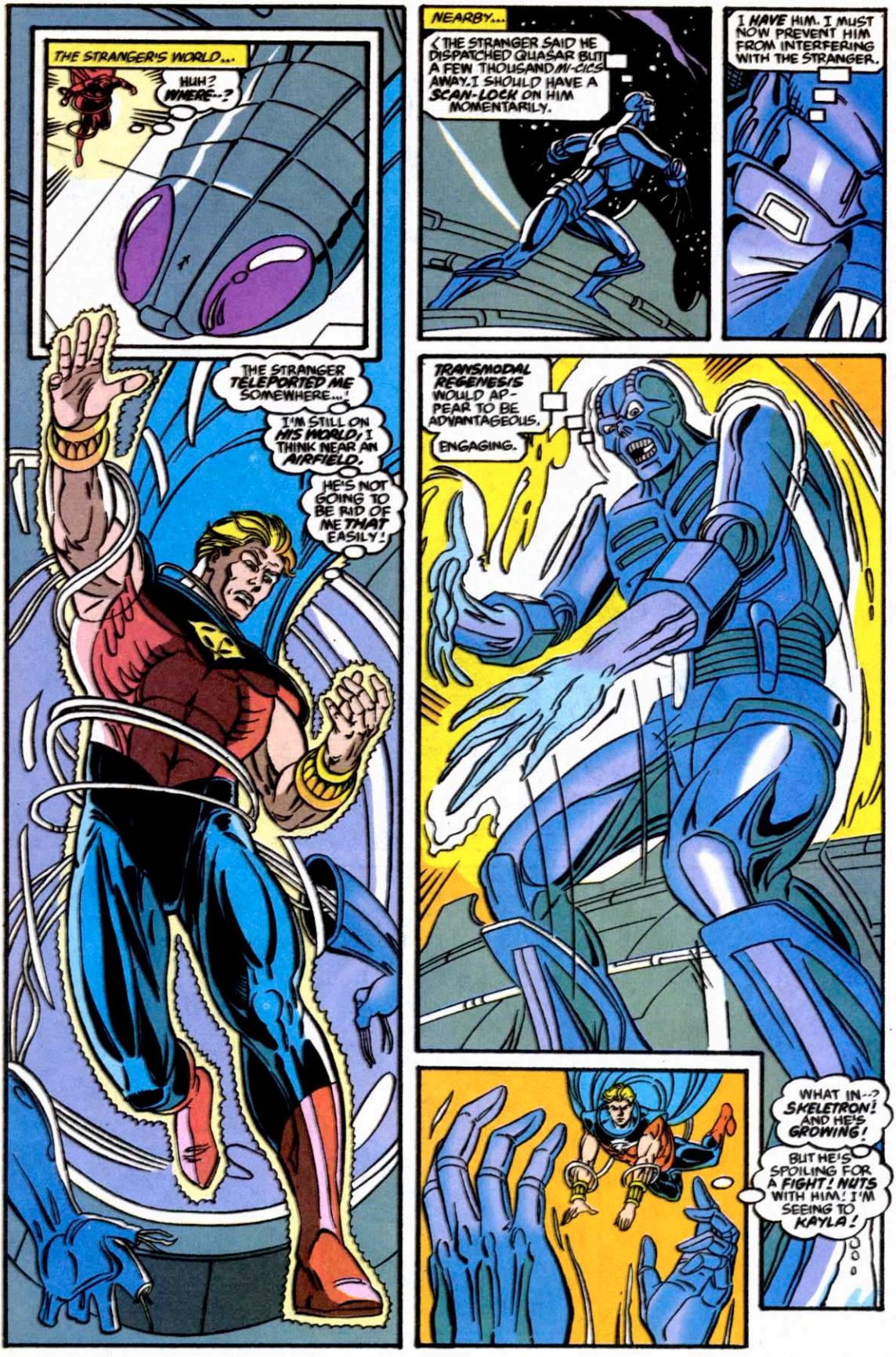
LIVE, MIKHAIL, LIVE--PLEASE...!
YOU CAN'T BE DEAD--YOU CAN'T BE!
AFTER SEVERAL MINUTES OF RESUSCITATION EFFORTS...
LAYNIA, HONEY, I THINK YOU SHOULD--
MMPH!
OH, MIKHAIL--!
KRIIK
YOU--ALIEN--BUTCHER!
I'LL--KILL YOU FOR WHAT YOU DID!
<ACCCK! MY SPINE--!>
THAT WASN'T SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN!
IT'S NOT FAIR!
<WHAT IS THIS? ONE OF THE EARTHERS GOING BERSERK!>
ZOOM

〈I SHALL PUT AN END TO THIS CHICANERY!〉
VROOOOSH
〈THE PUNY EARTHERS HAVE BEEN STUNNED BY MY DISPERSAL BLASTS! A CONCENTRATED BURST OF ENERGY AIMED AT EACH OF THEIR SKULLS SHOULD EFFECTIVELY END FURTHER ANNOYANCES.〉
〈I'LL BEGIN WITH THE--〉
〈NYBORN! GO TO SKELETRON AT ONCE! HE REQUIRES YOUR PERSONAL RESOURCES!〉
〈WAIT UNTIL I--〉
〈I'LL HAVE THE OTHERS DEAL WITH THE EARTHERS. HURRY!〉
〈BAH! SKELETRON WOULD BE FEEBLE WERE IT NOT FOR ME!〉


〈WHO WAS THAT WHO SUBDUED THE WATCHER? ME.〉
〈WHO WAS IT WHO SLEW THE PRIME UL'LULIAN? ME.〉
〈WHO WAS IT WHO OUT-MANEUVERED THE AXI-TUIN AGGREGATE IN THE DOOMSDAY WAR? ME.〉
UHHO...!?
〈CODABAC... DO YOU LIVE?〉
〈IT WILL TAKE MORE THAN THE WEIGHT OF THAT INSUFFERABLE MARVANITE TO SNUFF ME.〉
〈THE EARTHERS--WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM? ARE THEY DEAD?〉
〈LET US LOOK.〉
〈HOLD! IT'S THREKKER--WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?〉
〈HE'S NOT BREATHING, SKAR! THE EARTHER'S MUST HAVE KILLED HIM.〉
〈WHERE'S ZARDROX?〉
UNNOTICED BY THE TWO STAR-BLASTERS, THE INHUMAN DOG LOCKJAW TELEPORTS IN--
--GRABS HIS UNCONSCIOUS MASTER--
--AND WARPS AWAY...!
〈SOME OF THE EARTHERS ARE STIRRING. LET'S KILL THEM!〉
〈RIGHT.〉
BUT--!
〈CODABAC! SKAR!〉
〈EH? INSIDIO!〉


〈LOAD THE EARTHERS INTO THE SHUTTLE. I'VE SCHEDULED THEM FOR VIVISECTION!〉
THE STRANGER'S LABORATORY...
〈WATCHER... WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?〉
〈I COME TO OBSERVE.〉
ALLOWING YOURSELF TO BE SEEN BY THOSE YOU WISH TO OBSERVE IS UNUSUAL FOR YOU, ISN'T IT? YOU MUST BELIEVE WHAT I DO HERE IS OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE.〉
〈IT HAS THAT POTENTIAL.〉
〈I COULD MAKE YOU LEAVE.〉
〈DO NOT.〉
〈I TRUST YOU WILL NOT VIOLATE YOUR OATH OF NON-INTERFERENCE. YOU WILL REGRET IT IF YOU DO...〉
〈STARBRAND, TRANSFER TO ME...!〉

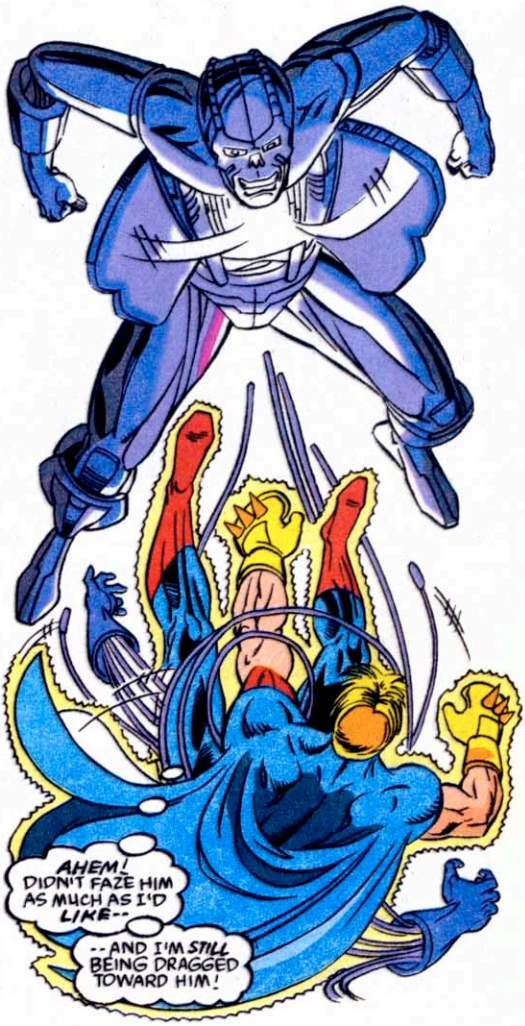

ELSEWHERE...
MY YEAR-LONG STAY IN THE SANITARIUM, TRAUMATIZED AS I WAS, WAS AT LEAST GOOD FOR SOMETHING...
MY ASTRAL BODY IS SO MUCH MORE POWERFUL NOW.
I CAN TRAVERSE THE WAKING WORLD AS EASILY AS I DO THE DREAMWORLD!
DOWN THERE--ONE OF THOSE I SEEK!
HANDS DOWN, MAN! WE KNOW ALL ABOUT THAT FUNNY STUFF YOU SHOOT OUT OF YOUR HANDS!
YOU MAY BE ABLE TO SHOOT ONE OF US, BUT I ASSURE YOU YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET ALL OF US BEFORE ONE OF US GETS YOU!
WHY AM I NOT FRIGHTENED?
NNNH!
HEYYYY!
F
O
M
NICE GOING, TENSEN!
WHO--? NIGHT-MASK!
YOU'RE PRETTY GOOD AT HANDLING LOWLIFES, BUT HOW ARE YOU AT SAVING THE WORLD?


THE STRANGER'S WORLD...
HUH? WHERE--?
THE STRANGER TELEPORTED ME SOMEWHERE...!
I'M STILL ON HIS WORLD, I THINK NEAR AN AIRFIELD.
HE'S NOT GOING TO BE RID OF ME THAT EASILY!
NEARBY...
THE STRANGER SAID HE DISPATCHED QUASAR BUT A FEW THOUSAND MI-CICS AWAY. I SHOULD HAVE A SCAN-LOCK ON HIM MOMENTARILY.
I HAVE HIM. I MUST NOW PREVENT HIM FROM INTERFERING WITH THE STRANGER.
TRANSMODAL REGENESIS WOULD APPEAR TO BE ADVANTAGEOUS.
ENGAGING.
WHAT IN--? SKELETRON! AND HE'S GROWING!
BUT HE'S SPOILING FOR A FIGHT! NUTS WITH HIM! I'M SEEING TO KAYLA!

WAITAMINUTE! I'M--HE'S PULLING ME TOWARD HIM!
HE MUST STILL HAVE CONTROL OVER THIS MESS OF WIRES!

OKAY, SKELLY-- I'LL COME TO PAPA!
--BUT YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LIKE IT!

WRANG


AHEM! DIDN'T FAZE HIM AS MUCH AS I'D LIKE--
--AND I'M STILL BEING DRAGGED TOWARD HIM!

--I BETTER AVOID GETTING *DRAGGED* IN THERE!

LET ME GET RID OF THESE BRASS KNUCKLES AND TRY *SOMETHING ELSE!*

HIS *RIBCAGE* OPENED UP-- LIKE AN *IRON MAIDEN*--

YOU ARE A VERY *ANNOYING ENTITY*, QUASAR. I WILL LIKE YOU BETTER WHEN YOU'VE BEEN CONVERTED INTO YOUR ESSENTIAL *AMINO ACIDS!*

HOW *WAS* THAT?

I CAN'T *BELIEVE* THIS!

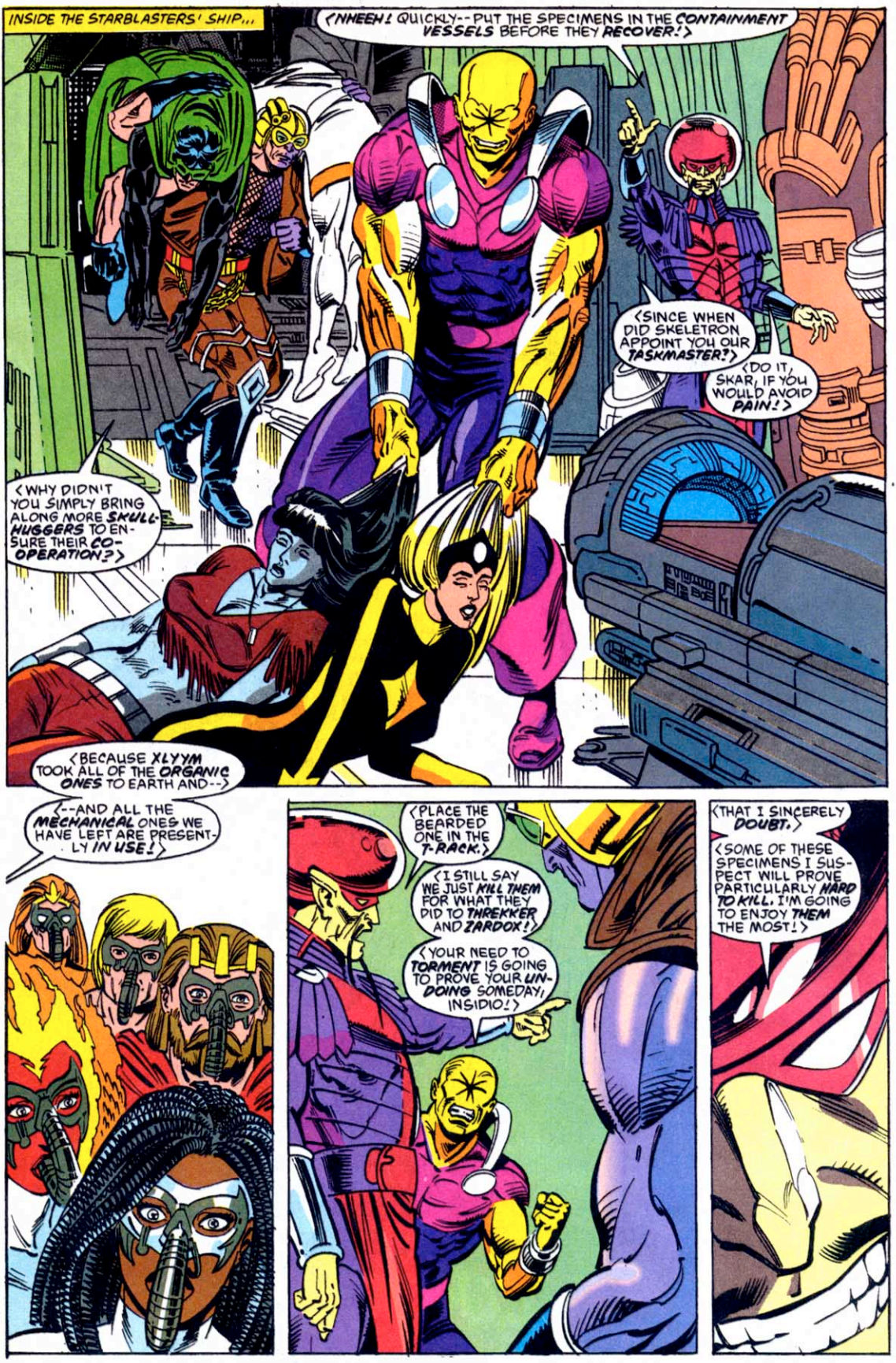
HOW CAN THIS STUPID ROBOT BE SO *POWERFUL?*

I KEEP SLICING HIS *WIRES*, BUT THEY JUST KEEP *REWEAVING TOGETHER!*

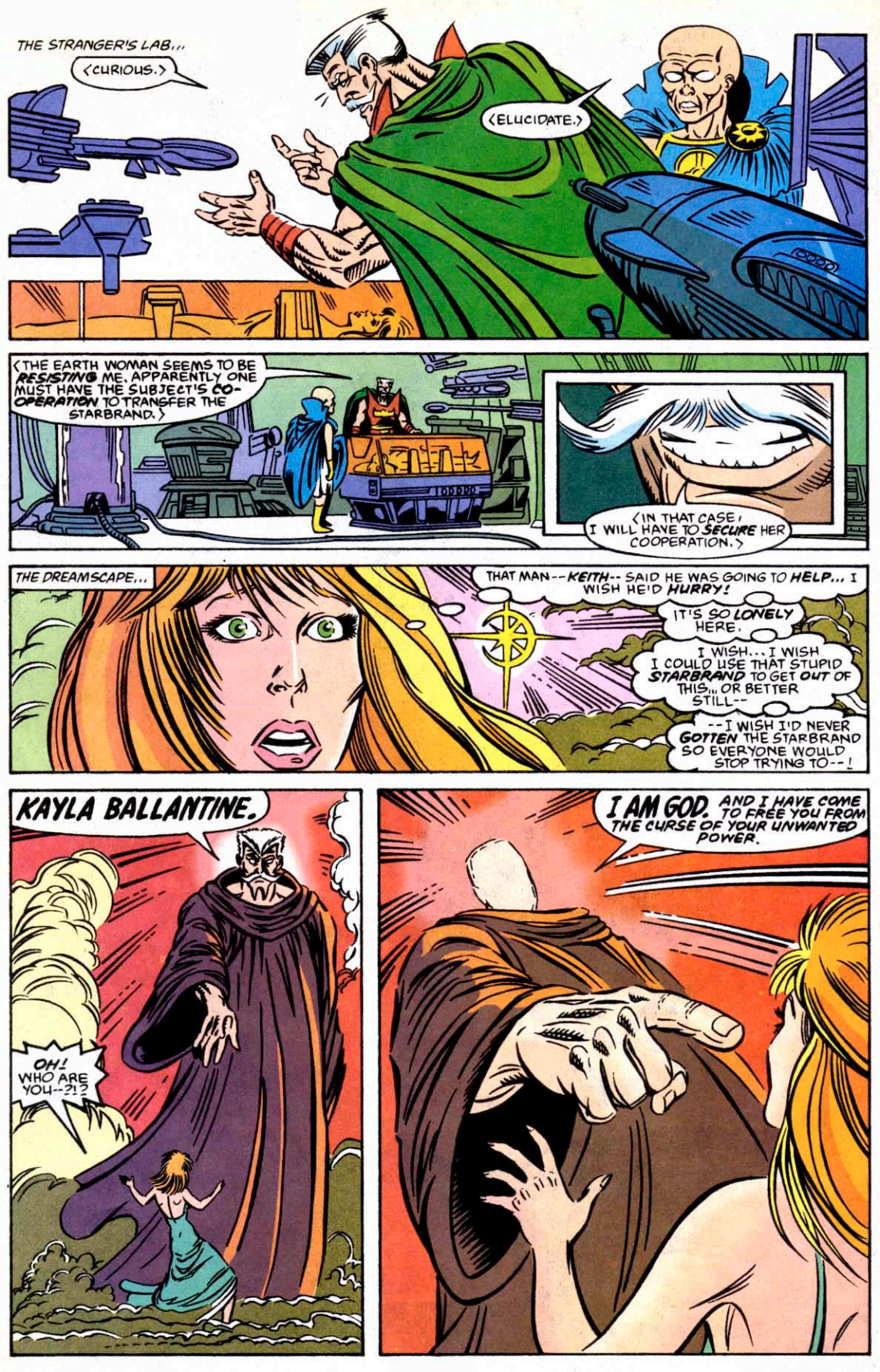
GOTTA *QUANTUM-JUMP* AWAY--

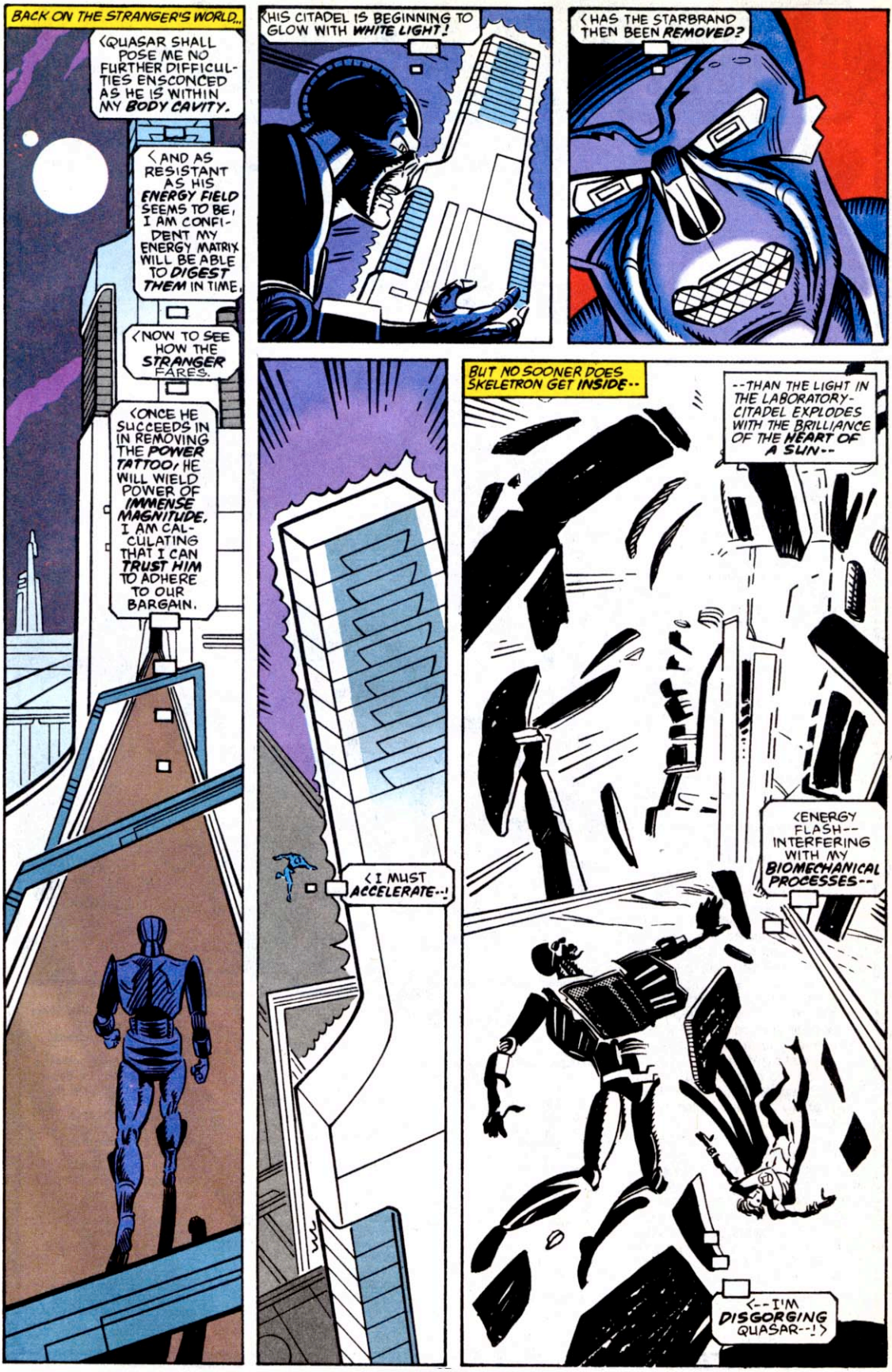
--I CAN'T!

HE'S JAMMING MY BANDS' *SPACE-WARP ABILITIES!*


INSIDE THE STARBLASTERS' SHIP...
〈NNEEH! QUICKLY--PUT THE SPECIMENS IN THE CONTAINMENT VESSELS BEFORE THEY RECOVER!〉
〈SINCE WHEN DID SKELETRON APPOINT YOU OUR TASKMASTER?〉
〈DO IT, SKAR, IF YOU WOULD AVOID PAIN!〉
〈WHY DIDN'T YOU SIMPLY BRING ALONG MORE SKULL-HUGGERS TO ENSURE THEIR CO-OPERATION?〉
〈BECAUSE XLYYM TOOK ALL OF THE ORGANIC ONES TO EARTH AND--〉
〈--AND ALL THE MECHANICAL ONES WE HAVE LEFT ARE PRESENTLY IN USE!〉
〈PLACE THE BEARDED ONE IN THE T-RACK.〉
〈I STILL SAY WE JUST KILL THEM FOR WHAT THEY DID TO THREKKER AND ZARDOX!〉
〈YOUR NEED TO TORMENT IS GOING TO PROVE YOUR UNDOING SOMEDAY, INSIDIO!〉
〈THAT I SINCERELY DOUBT.〉
〈SOME OF THESE SPECIMENS I SUSPECT WILL PROVE PARTICULARLY HARD TO KILL. I'M GOING TO ENJOY THEM THE MOST!〉

〈THIS BEARDED SKEEZER--I THINK HE'S THE ONE WHO BROUGHT THE LIGHTNING THAT FRIED ZARDROX!〉
〈COME ON, SIDDY--JUST LET ME DO HIM!〉
〈NO! I WISH TO EXAMINE HIS LIGHTNING-MAKING SKILL!〉
〈AAAAAR! STABBING PAIN--IN MY HEAD!〉
〈THAT'S JUST ME--
〈--PSIONICALLY BRUSHING AGAINST THE PAIN RECEPTORS IN YOUR BRAIN. IMAGINE WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE IF I PUT REAL PRESSURE ON THEM!〉
〈HEY, WHAT HAPPENED TO THE WATCHER THAT WAS HERE?〉
〈OH, HIM? UH, I... MOVED HIM ELSEWHERE!〉


THE STRANGER'S LAB...
〈CURIOUS.〉
〈ELUCIDATE.〉
〈THE EARTH WOMAN SEEMS TO BE RESISTING ME. APPARENTLY ONE MUST HAVE THE SUBJECT'S CO-OPERATION TO TRANSFER THE STARBRAND.〉
〈IN THAT CASE, I WILL HAVE TO SECURE HER COOPERATION.〉
THE DREAMSCAPE...
THAT MAN--KEITH-- SAID HE WAS GOING TO HELP... I WISH HE'D HURRY!
IT'S SO LONELY HERE.
I WISH... I WISH I COULD USE THAT STUPID STARBRAND TO GET OUT OF THIS... OR BETTER STILL--
--I WISH I'D NEVER GOTTEN THE STARBRAND SO EVERYONE WOULD STOP TRYING TO--!
KAYLA BALLANTINE.
OH! WHO ARE YOU--?!?
I AM GOD. AND I HAVE COME TO FREE YOU FROM THE CURSE OF YOUR UNWANTED POWER.


BACK ON THE STRANGER'S WORLD...
〈QUASAR SHALL POSE ME NO FURTHER DIFFICULTIES ENSCONCED AS HE IS WITHIN MY BODY CAVITY.
〈AND AS RESISTANT AS HIS ENERGY FIELD SEEMS TO BE, I AM CONFIDENT MY ENERGY MATRIX WILL BE ABLE TO DIGEST THEM IN TIME.
〈NOW TO SEE HOW THE STRANGER FARES.
〈ONCE HE SUCCEEDS IN IN REMOVING THE POWER TATTOO, HE WILL WIELD POWER OF IMMENSE MAGNITUDE. I AM CALCULATING THAT I CAN TRUST HIM TO ADHERE TO OUR BARGAIN.
〈HIS CITADEL IS BEGINNING TO GLOW WITH WHITE LIGHT!
〈HAS THE STARBRAND THEN BEEN REMOVED?
〈I MUST ACCELERATE--!
BUT NO SOONER DOES SKELETRON GET INSIDE--
--THAN THE LIGHT IN THE LABORATORY-CITADEL EXPLODES WITH THE BRILLIANCE OF THE HEART OF A SUN--
〈ENERGY FLASH-- INTERFERING WITH MY BIOMECHANICAL PROCESSES--
〈--I'M DISGORGING QUASAR--!〉

AND IN MOMENTS AN ENERGY MANIFESTATION ENGULFS THE PLANET--
--CAUSING IT TO PARTIALLY SHIFT OUT OF THE UNIVERSE ENTIRELY!

AND, LIGHT MINUTES AWAY, IN THE SKIES OF A PLANET EXCEEDINGLY LIKE OUR OWN...
NIGHTMASK! THAT LIGHT--?
YOU AND OVERSHADOW HAVE PSYCHIC POWERS, PSI-HAWK-- DO YOU SENSE WHAT IT MEANS?
IT MEANS, BOY, THAT THE ALIENS ARE HERE!
CONTINUED IN QUASAR #56!